THE GREAT DUEL.

W. R. GREG.

WORKS BY

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THE GREAT DUEL;

ITS TRUE MEANING AND USES.

BY

W. R. GREG.

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THE GREAT DUEL:

ITS TRUE MEANING AND ISSUES.

In endeavouring to estimate correctly the claims and purposes of the two combatants who are now fighting out their tremendous duel on the soil of France, in measuring their obligations and their rights, and awarding, so far as we can, to each his own share of blame or acquittal, it is necessary at the outset to put aside all irrelevant and unessential considerations, and not to suffer either our sympathies, our wishes, or our fears to confuse our judicial perceptions of the truth. Personal sympathies and antipathies have nothing to say in questions of right and wrong. Personal hopes of good or dread of evil, whether national or individual, must not be permitted to distort, or suppress, or exaggerate indisputable

facts. Neither the groans nor the anguish of the sufferer, nor even his irrelevant excellences, must blind us to his moral faults or his actual offences; nor should the harsh severity of retributive justice, however unrelenting, tempt us to deny that it *is* justice after all. We may admit that, as individuals, the French are singularly agreeable, and often loveable, and the Prussians ungenial and hard. We may be more susceptible to cosmopolitan than to patriotic considerations; we may, like Jacoby and Garibaldi, feel our hearts beat at the mere dream of a Universal Republic, and regard foreign democrats as nearer and dearer than home monarchists or nobles; we may be essentially aristocratic and anti-popular in all our tastes and predilections; we may regard the vague aspirations of nationality as more sacred and fascinating than any others; we may have the strongest preference for the Celtic or the Teutonic type of intellect and character. But all these sentiments are utterly apart from the questions—Which party is clearly right and which grievously wrong in the present quarrel? What are the victors justified in demanding, and what ought the vanquished frankly to concede? And what, for the best interests of

Europe, as well as of the combatants themselves, ought we to desire as the issue of the strife? Thus much, at least, may be asked from controversialists on the two sides, if it cannot be expected from the combatants themselves—That they shall candidly recognize indisputable facts, and frankly admit the legitimate inferences deducible therefrom.

Among those facts which it is idle to palliate or deny are the historical antecedents of Prussia. They are not altogether creditable, and they are not particularly reassuring. For nearly two centuries the rulers of Prussia have pursued a career of aggrandizement, curiously persistent, nearly always successful, and unscrupulous without precedent or parallel, except in the brigand-like encroachments of Napoleon the Great. She has steadily enriched herself and extended her boundaries at the cost of every neighbouring State, usually by war and foray, sometimes by diplomacy and intrigue, always choosing her moment with a sagacity unchecked by shame or pity, and clinging to her conquests or her spoil with the tenacity of a bull-dog. She has always been parsimonious, even to niggardliness; and her chiefs have therefore been generally rich

enough to take prompt advantage of any sudden opportunity for the acquisition of territory or of power. She has usually been as hard and ruthless to her own people as to surrounding nations, and thus they have never grown either enervated by luxury or demoralized by administrative corruption. She has pursued her aim with that patient, unswerving, cold, vigilant consistency, which in the end tires out or wears through every obstacle. She has despoiled enemies and allies without partiality or predilection. By these means she has risen from being a small, poor, second-rate principality at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to being the first military power in Europe before the close of the nineteenth; and a few years more will probably see her monarch the Emperor, and virtual, if not nominal and absolute, wielder of all the forces—moral, material, and warlike—of a nation or confederacy of forty millions of the finest people in Europe. At one epoch she robbed Austria and Poland. She came out of the wars with Napoleon bleeding and suffering indeed, but enlarged, regenerated, and mightier than ever, and recognized as one of the five great Powers of Europe. She then put herself at the head of

that stirring, prolific, invigorating idea of a united Germany, the magic and future triumph of which she alone had the sagacity to discern in time; and in the might of that idea she despoiled Denmark and humbled Austria, without either compassion for the weak or deference for the strong; and, as a final stroke, she absorbed Hanover and a multitude of smaller States, and has now virtually, and we may assume definitively, reached the secure hegemony of the new German nation she has created.

It is undeniable that in all this there is enough to excite the gravest uneasiness in the minds of all European statesmen, and to make them watch the new champion with vigilant mistrust. Certainly there is nothing in her past to reassure us as to the future. She has been in the main the same under all rulers and all ministers—under a Parliamentary as under an Autocratic *régime.* Nominally constitutional, with an elected Chamber and a broad basis for elections, the sovereign has yet been able to impose his will upon the nation; and the Liberal party, intelligent, resolute, and numerous as it was, has proved powerless to control him, or, probably, in consideration of the object he put forward or

really had in view, thought it wise or patriotic to waive all opposition for a time,—feeling that the unity of Germany was, at present at least, a paramount and more pressing purpose than the ascendancy of liberal doctrines or individual freedom. Neither is it possible to disguise from ourselves that the virulent passions excited by conflict, and the acquisitive passions stimulated by success, are beginning their usual and apparently inevitable work of demoralization on the German people. The high-minded and single-minded purity of purpose with which, on the part of the majority of the nation at least, this war was entered upon, has suffered notable impairment. The popular pride has been inflated—as well it may; and the popular pretensions are increasing in their scope, and deplorably receding in their equity. Influential organs and eminent publicists are putting forward claims redolent rather of inflamed imaginations than of sober justice or political necessity. The army, too—though we believe most charges brought against it to be false, and nearly all to be exaggerated—appears to be falling off from that unusually rigid standard of consideration for non-combatants and of tenderness to the

vanquished with which it set out. Conflict exasperates even the gentlest natures,—and the Prussians are not exactly gentle. The habit of living on the conquered can scarcely fail to foster that hard insolence of demeanour for which Prussian officials, and especially military officials, have long been noted. All this, we confess, makes us most anxious for the termination of the conflict, and not too confident even that its termination will bring about a speedy return to better feelings and soberer thoughts. The sentiments expressed by many German organs of opinion, as well as the now menaced annexation of Luxembourg, are eminently calculated to awaken grave uneasiness and mistrust. It cannot be made manifest too clearly or too soon, that as long as Germany merely insists upon the expenses of the war and a securer military frontier, the sympathies and approval of Europe will go with her—*but not one step further.*

At the same time there is much to reassure us against what so many are beginning to dread, viz. the upspringing of a lust of conquest on the part of Germany, scarcely less immoral and not at all less formidable than that which

has so long made France the pest and scourge of Europe. We need not fancy that there are moral elements in the Teutonic character which exempt it from the love of power common to all powerful nations, but we think that among Germans this passion will exist under certain specific modifications, and show itself rather as the pride of grandeur than the thirst for domination. It will be rather self-contained and self-worshipping than encroaching or acquisitive. The race has a definite ideal before its eyes; it will be restless and probably aggressive till that idea has got realized; it may then, and we trust will, repose contented with the completion of its purpose. German ambition and German dreams are, we incline to think, intrinsically different from French ones. The first yearn for completeness and unity at home: the second for a dictatorial empire abroad. The former, therefore, are limited and specific; the latter are in their essence unbounded and insatiable. The Teutonic aim and idea is the gathering together and fusing into one great nation all the scattered and divided fragments of the Fatherland, —of making the nation co-extensive with the race. Some, no doubt, give too loose and wide

an interpretation to this idea, and would extend its practicable application to a degree which neither right nor logic would warrant. But the conception itself is clear and definite enough, and certainly not illegitimate nor ignoble. We do not believe that—as yet at least, and on the whole—the people or their leaders, whether thinkers, statesmen, or poets, desire to conquer, rule, or dictate to, States and races alien to the genuine Teutonic stock; or would seek for that stock anything beyond ample scope for its development, and free outlets for its industry;—an ambition and a claim that might lead it far, no doubt, but still must be admitted to be far less menacing to the peace of Europe, and far more defensible in its character than the vague, greedy, illimitable Gallic thirst for territory, influence, and dominion. We believe, moreover, that the moral sense of the German people is higher, clearer, and more active than that of France; that a distinctly unjust and aggressive war would never be popular in Germany, and would be emphatically condemned by that substantial and educated public opinion to which dynastic and warrior ambition must bow at last, especially in a nation essentially intellectual and cultivated.

Then the military system of Germany is not favourable to aggressive warfare. The army, it is true, national as it is in its basis and character, is, from the very perfection and peculiarity of its recently modified organization, a tremendous weapon in the hands of an ambitious monarch or an unscrupulous statesman, and an unpopular war might, possibly enough, be undertaken. But we greatly question whether it could be carried on with any zeal or ardour, or would last long. And certain it is that nothing short of an almost universal and highly-strung enthusiasm pervading all ranks and classes, even though wielded by the stern resolution of Bismarck, and the wonderful strategic genius of Moltke, could ever achieve such successes as have marked the present conflict. Those who argue from the campaign of 1870, and draw thence the conclusion of the irresistible might and supremacy of Prussian armies *per se*, are basing a general inference on very inadequate premises. The circumstances of that campaign have been altogether exceptional. Never again, probably, can such a number of convergent causes of success be expected to meet together. All the military and political genius on the one

side; all the military and political imbecility on the other. In France corruption, indolence, conceit, luxury, and incapacity; rottenness in every department of civil and military administration; a government which had no real root in the affections of the people, and was abhorred by all the educated classes in the nation; a cause hopelessly unjust, which could claim no approval, and could arouse only the worst and lowest passions in its favour; and an army of which the soldiers had no respect for or confidence in their chiefs, and the officers no control over their men. On the other side, a cause which enlisted all the best feelings and the most stimulating associations of the whole people, as well as their angriest passions; the vehement and unanimous uprising of an exasperated nation; an iron organization, which combined all capacities in one resistless whole; hardy habits, mutual confidence, and a readiness for any efforts and any sacrifices. Such a marvellous concurrence of all the elements of victory with all the causes of defeat can scarcely, without a miracle, occur again. But the essential point to notice is that in Germany, by the very conditions of its military system, a great war and a long war in-

volves such a terrible disturbance of every social arrangement, carries such individual and universal distress into every household, so deranges every career, professional or industrial alike, so paralyses commerce and manufacturing productiveness, as to be not only ruinously costly in the end, but to be supportable only by the strongest enthusiasm and the most general unanimity of sentiment. In a patriotic war in Germany the nation would be unanimous and irresistible; a dynastic or purely aggressive war, one for selfish or aggrandizing objects, would be almost impossible, or, if possible, would call forth only half the nation's strength. In no other country in Europe is a war so felt and realized and brought home to every household. In no other country does war bring with it such dreadful disorganization of all social life—such a rupture of pursuits and prospects for the young, such an interruption of peace and comfort to the old.

But there are some remaining considerations, of minor weight, no doubt, but still not without their influence, which make us dread German ambition less than the vast power put forth in this campaign might otherwise suggest. We must indicate them very briefly. In the first

place, the *personnel* of Prussian statesmen must be largely altered ere many years are past. Moltke is an old man, Bismarck is not immortal, and, so far as is yet known, has no analogue—no kindred spirit on whom his mantle will descend. The King, essentially a soldier, and the head and soul of the military party, with no ideas beyond those of piety and war, with neither a cultivated nor a very sound intelligence, will shortly be succeeded by a prince of an altogether different type, and endowed with far wider and more enlightened views of what constitutes the true grandeur of a nation. Under him we may reasonably hope that Germany will devote her energies rather to consolidation than to conquest. In the second place, it is nearly certain that the Liberal party in Prussia, which for so many years carried on a struggle with Bismarck and the squireen classes for a more constitutional *régime*, but which has been in abeyance since the war with Denmark, will renew its old efforts with more tranquil times, and with the accomplishment of the national dream of unification, which even Liberals deemed more essential, or at least more urgent, than their special party aims. And, thirdly,

these Liberals, who represent the really progressive and intellectual life of Prussia, will, we expect, find themselves powerfully reinforced by the amalgamation into the North German Confederation of the Southern States. The South Germans will introduce a modifying and softening element—features at once milder, wider, more congenial, and more intellectual—into the harsh, narrow, martinet-like character of the Prussians; and at one and the same time render Prussian conquests more unlikely to come, and less intolerable if they do come. If in time the Austrian Germans should also join their brethren in one grand union, we may fairly hope that the more genial and sympathetic elements of the Teutonic race will gradually predominate over the sterner and harder ones which now make Prussians so generally detested, in spite of their sterling and often admirable qualities.

Let us turn to France. And here I must say at the outset that, of all the positions taken by herself and her advocates from the beginning of July to the end of November at which we are now arrived, not one appears to me for an instant tenable. Of all the pleas put forward in

her behalf, not one will bear five minutes' cross-examination in the witness-box. First, we are told that this war was in no sense a national war, either in its inception or its reception; that it was especially an Imperial enterprise, undertaken against the will of the nation, for the selfish and separate interests of the Imperial dynasty; that with the fall of the Empire its purpose was over, its guilt atoned for, the risk of its renewal removed. I take leave to say that this is a mere piece of special pleading, worthy only of a Parliamentary debate or a hustings declamation, and possessing barely plausibility or foundation enough to float it even for such brief hour. True, the moment and the pretext for the war were chosen by the Emperor and his court, and chosen with strangest infelicity; but the object it aimed at and the pretensions it expressed were intensely and rootedly national; and it was to recover the popularity lost by the imputed supineness and failures of his foreign policy that it was undertaken. True, the declaration of war was denounced by M. Thiers and his friends, but expressly on the ground, not that the purpose was illegitimate or the attack unjust, but that the time was inauspicious and the army unpre-

pared. M. Thiers not only maintained the very claim the war was waged in order to make good, but only a short time previously he had assailed the Government in his most vigorous style for having suffered Prussia to grow great without interfering by force of arms to keep her down, or securing for France some equivalent increase of territory. True, the Republican Opposition in the Chamber set their faces actively against the war, but not as foes to war in the abstract, still less to war for the aggrandizement of their country. They opposed it because, if successful—as they, like most Frenchmen, expected—it would have placed the Emperor on a pinnacle of prosperity and power from which they could not hope to dislodge him. Witness poor Prevost Paradol's bitter and premature end, and the cause alleged for it by those who knew him best. Witness, again, the first circular of Jules Favre, who, acknowledging the popularity of the war, took credit to himself and his friends for opposing it in spite of that popularity, and losing their own popularity thereby. True, once more, the reports of the prefects recently published represent the idea of war as unwelcome among the peasantry and in the provinces generally.

War, we admit, never is welcome with the rural class; for it increases the blood-tax, which they chiefly pay, takes them from the fields they love, and menaces their modest gains. Peasants, it is true, are seldom clamorous for glory or greatly interested in any political controversies; but it must never be forgotten that it was upon the adhesion of these classes that Louis Napoleon's throne was primarily and chiefly based; that three times they had proclaimed this adhesion in the most signal fashion; and that his chief claim upon their confidence and popularity was his name,—his pretension to be the heir and representative of that pestilent tyrant, the tenacious hold of whose name upon the imagination of France, and especially of ignorant France, is due to his conquests and his glory.

But what do we mean when we speak of the "nation,"—of "national" wishes, "national" temper, "national" decisions? What, in fact, for all practical purposes, and especially in matters connected with foreign policy, constitutes THE NATION? Clearly not the silent, sluggish, inactive masses, who are the pawns of the great game, to be counted with as numbers and as human materials, but possessing no

opinions and exercising no initiative. The nation, in France as in all other countries, politically regarded, consists of those who guide the nation's thought, who determine the nation's action, who colour the nation's character; of the orators who arouse its passions, the writers who stimulate or represent its intelligence, the men of science or art who illustrate its name; of the ministers who rule it, of the Chambers (where a constitution exists), of the wealthy and commercial classes who can make their wishes felt, of the army where it is not a mere machine, of the priesthood who wield the ignorant and superstitious, of the artisan population of the towns where their intellect has been awakened and exercised on public interests as it has been in the great cities of France, and, last not least, of the *bourgeoisie.* In a word, the nation consists of its active and outspeaking, not of its passive and inarticulate class. Now, who can deny that of these active classes, of what we may term the political and practically operative portion of the people—of the Government, the Parliamentarians, the influential literary men, the army, and the artisans—the favourite and predominating ideas have not always been the military and

political supremacy of France, the extension of her boundaries, her dictatorial position in Europe? Have they not all, with one consent, and without distinction of party, constantly upheld the most extreme pretensions of the country—her claim to be the foremost of European States; to resent as a distinct injury and menace to her position the growth, consolidation, and enrichment of surrounding nations; to consider herself insulted if any political action was anywhere taken, if any king was chosen, or any constitution changed, or any alliance formed, *without her leave?* Have they not always fretted against the boundaries assigned her in 1815—or, indeed, against boundaries at all? Have they not all, by common consent, striven to keep contiguous States weak and disunited? Did they not nearly all disapprove of the Emperor's proceedings which eventually led to the unification of Italy—a disapproval barely silenced by the hush-money of Savoy and Nice? Was it not the bitterest indictment against the Emperor that he had failed to prevent the aggrandizement of Prussia and the progressive consolidation of Germany? And was it not the consciousness of this that made him seize upon so miserable a

pretext as the Hohenzollern candidature with such indefensible tenacity? In a word, have not all classes and parties which can be said to have a sentient or active existence at all—priests, Orleanists, deputies, Imperialists, historians, statesmen, orators, the army, the *remuant* population of the cities—been, as a rule and for a long series of years, unanimous in support, not of this precise war perhaps, but of the doctrines, desires, objects, and pretensions of which this war was simply the condensed expression and the logical and inevitable outcome?*

* It seems superfluous to adduce specific proofs of a general allegation which can scarcely meet with serious denial. Mr. Carlyle's letter to the 'Times' of Friday, the 18th November, shows conclusively what an evil neighbour France has been to Germany for nearly 400 years. All readers of history know what a persistent spirit of universal aggression and dictation set in with the ministry of Richelieu and the reign of Louis XIV. Of the Napoleonic pretensions to enable France to give law to Europe we need not speak The details given in Lord Palmerston's letters of the negotiations in 1831 and 1840, prove only too clearly that, under the Orleanists and the Peace Monarch *par excellence*, the encroaching and dictatorial spirit of the nation was as rampant and ingrained as ever. The whole life of M. Thiers—an eminently representative man, a typical Frenchman—all his writings, all his speeches, every action of his ministerial career, have been inspired by this spirit, and have breathed this pretension—the pretension, I mean, that France's

Remembering all this, we see now why Count Bismarck was warranted in treating as futile, and almost audaciously insincere, M. Jules Favre's

voice ought to be, and must be made, paramount in determining all political and international arrangements, and that no other nation must be suffered to grow strong lest France should grow relatively weak.

Precisely the same views were known to be held by the unfortunate Prevost-Paradol, also a leading spirit among the better class of Frenchmen, and appear in every page of the last melancholy chapter of his 'France Nouvelle.' He warns his countrymen in the most solemn manner that the unity of Germany, if once accomplished, is the fall and humiliation of France; that talent, literature, the graces and the pleasures of existence, may still remain to her, but that life, power, splendour, and glory will be gone. "Que l'union de l'Allemagne en un seul état s'achève en face de la France inactive ou malgré la France vaincue, c'est d'une façon ou de l'autre *l'irrévocable déchéance de la grandeur française.*" . . . . "La France *disparaîtra de la scène politique.* . . . . Il n'y a pas de milieu pour une nation qui a connu la grandeur et la gloire entre le maintien de son ancien prestige et la complète impuissance." Everywhere the same idea—that greatness has no *essential* life—that all is comparative and nothing positive.

One more quotation *à l'appui.*

"It is hardly necessary to remark that if any portion of French public opinion exists which is characterized by liberal moderation, by discretion, by good sense, and the absence of any savour of 'chauvinism,' it is to be found represented in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* Nevertheless, here is a passage from the 'Chronique de la Quinzaine' of the *Revue* of the 1st of August, 1866, immediately after Sadowa, which may be held to set forth

demand that the German army should retire, and declare their grievance removed and their quarrel over, as soon as the Imperial dynasty had fallen.

the opinions of the most reasonable and least aggressive portion of the French nation :—

"'The Great Frederick (of Prussia) perfectly comprehended that the expansive force of France was turned to the side of Germany. "France," said he, "is bounded on the west by the Pyrenees which separate it from Spain and form a barrier which nature herself has placed there. The ocean serves as a boundary on the north of France; the Mediterranean and the Alps on the south. But on the east France has no other limits than those of its own moderation and justice. Alsace and Lorraine, dismembered from the Empire, have carried to the Rhine the frontier line of the domination of France." That this, the only side on which, according to Frederick, we are not suffocated by the obstacle of a natural barrier, *should be closed upon us by the mass of an enormous State, is a fact so contrary to all our national existence, and to the natural constitution of France, that it is impossible that French bosoms should not be oppressed by it.*'

"The italicizing is my own. And surely the words are remarkable enough to deserve being underlined. England has to endure being 'suffocated' by ocean all round her. Italy is equally shut in by the Alps; Spain by the Pyrenees. But France, like a steam boiler, must have an open valve—must have the means of *expansion*.

"To enable the English reader to estimate the full force of this very remarkable passage, as showing definitely that not the Emperor only but *France* wanted war against the State which with its mass was closing her only open frontier, it may be as well to remind some readers that the *Revue* is, and always was anything but Imperial in its sympathies. "T."

But there were many other reasons why Germany should decline to lay down her arms with her work only half done. Her object was not merely to overthrow the Government of Napoleon, alleged to be not the choice of France, but a tyranny that weighed her down:—that was the business of Frenchmen, not of Germans. It was needful for her not only to repel this attack, but to guard against future ones. The desire for territorial aggrandizement was perennial on the part of France;—must the peril of Germany be perennial too? Must she always be forced to stand, sword in hand, upon an indefensible and menaced frontier, waiting till her embarrassment should become her neighbour's opportunity? The warnings of the past made her feel the absolute need of some security for the future. The Foreign Minister of a day assured the Chancellor of the Confederation that Germany need fear no aggression now, since France was republican, and republicans were never warlike, dictatorial, or encroaching. Bismarck might have asked what pages of history gave them this flattering character. Of the only two French republics he had read of, one had overrun half Europe, and the other had crushed the nascent liberties of

Rome. But he merely pointed out that the present Republican Government, itself so insecure, could offer him no guarantee. It was precarious and transient; whereas the peace he wanted must be permanent and assured. France notoriously was *not* republican, nor Paris either;—and the Republic would pass away with the first national assembly that met to decide the future form of government—or, at all events, with the first crisis that called forth a genuine and combined expression of the nation's will.

Bismarck had yet another reason for rendering the German victory as complete and signal as possible, for doing his work so thoroughly that it should never have to be done again, for so forcing the French to feel and realize and remember their defeat, that they should not for long years to come be tempted to appeal to arms or to renew aggression. He knew better than most men what this war had cost Germany, what frightful loss of life, what ruinous social and industrial disorganization. He knew, too, by what astounding efforts—efforts not easily repeated and not long sustainable—victory had been assured. He knew, moreover, how easily the result might have been widely different, how improbable it was

that victory so signal or so immediate should crown German arms in any future conflict. If the Emperor of the French had either been, or possessed, a genius for war; if his army had been as numerous, and his military organization as efficient, as nearly every one believed; if his character had not been naturally slow and undecided, and his vigour impaired by disease and age; if he had not hesitated, or been forced to hesitate, at the first critical moments of the campaign; if, in a word, such a combination of disastrous influences had not paralysed the normal genius of France, the ultimate issue of the war might perhaps not have been reversed, but the war would have been fought on German soil, the conflict would have been incomparably longer and fiercer, and the victory, if gained, would have been far less complete. It might easily have been a drawn game, or an indecisive duel, to be renewed from time to time as opportunities favoured one side or the other. On the next occasion Bismarck and Moltke might be dead, and have left no successors or analogues behind them. Statesmen and generals might have arisen in France the very opposite of the torpid Napoleon, the windy Gramont, or the incapable

Lebœuf. The administration might have been purified, and the army remodelled and re-moralized, and the whole fortunes of the conflict changed. Never, again, we may feel confident, will Prussia win so signal or so quick a victory. Bismarck, therefore, was fully warranted in saying, "I will make peace only on such terms as will either secure me from having to fight again, or, if fight I must, will enable me to fight with all the advantages I have conquered now."*

It is not easy to see what security, short of a better and more defensible frontier, defeated France could offer to victorious Germany. Let us look at one or two that have been suggested. A large war indemnity? Nothing more futile or unreal could be named. In 1815, France, exhausted by nearly twenty years' campaigning,

* "What the Germans want is not to be conquerors in the next war, but never to have to fight again. They desire (and no one can say it is not a legitimate desire) that the terrible disorganization of their whole social system, the fearful slaughter of their citizens, the desolation carried into every village and almost every home, shall not be again inflicted upon them at the will of a restless and greedy neighbour. They want peace, not victory. They want security not against defeat but against war. They say distinctly and naturally, 'We don't intend, and we have a right to refuse, to have to do our hard and bloody work over again.'"—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

lay at the mercy of her outraged foes. They abstained from demanding any surrender of her old territory: they inflicted an enormous pecuniary fine; they occupied many of her fortresses till it was paid. Yet within seven years she marched an invading army across the Pyrenees on the most flimsy and unwarrantable of dynastic pretexts. In these days a rich and industrious nation feels a money indemnity, however great, no more than a wealthy scapegrace, addicted to rough practical jokes, feels a fine of five pounds. France would probably not really *suffer under*, scarcely even be conscious of, a mulct of a hundred millions sterling. She would borrow the money from capitalists at five per cent. She would add, that is, £5,000,000 a year to the interest of her debt; and this sum, spread over forty millions of people, is just *half-a-crown per head*—or, say a shilling for the poor and ten shillings for the rich. But practically, it would not even be this;—practically, it would be nothing at all. A moderate reduction in the standing army, a reasonable and easily-effected retrenchment in the enormous civil expenditure, such a degree of vigilance in the prevention of waste and corruption as a popular chamber would

almost certainly exercise, might economize, not five millions, but nearer ten; and the war indemnity would thus be paid without the imposition or augmentation of a single tax, and without the abstraction of sixpence from the pocket of a single taxpayer. Would this be a penalty such as France deserves, or a lesson such as she is likely to remember?

"But insist upon the dismantling of her eastern fortresses, and the reduction of her standing army to a fixed maximum, or perhaps even the abolition of the conscription." A moment's consideration will make clear the futility of every one of these suggestions. The world is fast coming round to the conviction that fortresses—*i.e.* fortified towns—are a great political and military mistake; and entrenched camps, which will take their place, cannot be forbidden. Fortresses may be razed by treaty, but who can prevent their being rebuilt? The negotiator may make this reconstruction a *casus belli*, no doubt; but it is precisely the occurrence of these *casus belli* that treaties are designed to preclude. What comfort would it be to Prussia that she would have a right to declare war again in case France should attempt to restore the

fortifications of Metz? Far better continue the war now. The same remark applies to the reduction of the standing army. How else is the negotiator to take care that the specified maximum is not exceeded, otherwise than by making such transgression a *casus belli?* And how prevent France from taking example by Prussia, and making her whole people an available and trained army by short terms of enforced service? And again, how can one nation dictate to another the repeal of this or that municipal law? Or how enforce such dictation unless by prompt and constant hostilities? And as to demanding the surrender of half the French fleet, as has been suggested, this might be a gain to Prussia, but to France it would be simply adding twenty millions to her pecuniary mulct. So rich a nation would replace her ironclads in five years, and never feel the cost.

Nothing, therefore, remains except a rectification of the frontier; and no one who looks at the map and studies the features of the country can fail to recognize how urgently this frontier needs rectification in the interest of the characteristically pacific, as against the characteristically aggressive, *riverain.* A river is now

generally admitted to be about the very worst boundary a State can have. The line of the Vosges mountains, only a few miles to the west, is a natural frontier and a strong one. An irregular line drawn from Sarreguemines to near Monbéliard, includes a strip of territory actually bristling with fortresses, every one of which in French hands is a menace to the peace of Germany—Bitsche, Phalsbourg, Haguenau, Strasbourg, Schlestadt, Breisach, and Belfort. That the possession of this narrow district is essential to German security against the aggressions of her restless neighbours, has always been maintained by the first military authorities—and by none more explicitly than by the Duke of Wellington. On the 17th October, 1814, he wrote:—"All the territories on the left bank of the Rhine should belong to one power only, *and that power should be Prussia.*" Now this very limited rectification of frontier is all that *as yet* Bismarck has insisted upon; and no one can pretend that under the circumstances the demand is not moderate in the extreme. What further claims, after the conquest of France is complete, and the sacrifices and efforts of Germany to effect it have been indefinitely aug-

mented, the victors may put forward, we cannot predict. To ask for Lorraine and Metz would, we think, be impolitic and harsh. Lorraine is eminently French, and Metz is so near Paris, that it would be an unquestionable, even if a deserved humiliation for France to yield it. In German hands it would be a perpetual irritation, and could scarcely be a permanent possession. Nor—and this is the great objection—is its cession *necessary:* its dismantling, perhaps, is.

"But," argues the French Foreign-office, echoed by its spokesmen here, "to yield territory is humiliation and dishonour, and to hand over our reluctant fellow-countrymen to the conqueror as the price of peace would be cowardly and mean. It is as immoral to ask it as to submit to it." In reply we say: These pleas are simply indecent in the mouths of Frenchmen. To have to yield territory is, no doubt, humiliation to a powerful State; but it is no greater humiliation to France than it would have been to Germany; it is a humiliation she has brought upon herself; it is a humiliation she desired to inflict upon her enemy, and which it is righteous should recoil upon the aggressor. The loss of territory, Jules Favre alleges, would

be loss of *prestige* to France. Granted; but it is precisely this idea of French prestige which it is essential to the peace of Europe to have dissipated. As to dishonour, the dishonour lies in the original offence, not in the subsequent atonement; the dishonour was consummated on the day when France declared war for purposes of acquisition and dictation; "Not that which goeth into a man defileth him, but that which cometh forth." If France could now turn the scales against her conqueror and end the war without a single sacrifice, her dishonour would not be one whit the less. No doubt, too, it is a disgrace to have to transfer citizens as well as soil to a hostile State; no doubt such a condition is harsh to enforce and painful to concede. But *France* has no right to argue thus. France wanted to impose that very condition on her foe. Alsace is a part, and it is said a peculiarly attached part of France; Alsace, therefore, shared in the original crime of the French people—the sins of the Government are sins of the nations. As to the condition being immoral and illegitimate, I reply that the plea amounts to this—*that under no circumstances must an oppressive and predatory State*

be weakened or curtailed; that under no circumstances must the most flagrant and unprovoked attack be punished otherwise than by a fine. Now, is there any publicist or moralist who is prepared to maintain this thesis? If not *cadit quæstio.* And can any thesis be more distinctly mischievous, more *immoral,* in the sense of fostering immorality? It simply means that the greatest of all crimes is to be atoned for by the slightest of all penalities. It offers the irresistible encouragement to every daring, ambitious, burglarious Power—"Do anything you like; seize on any neighbour's property; venture on the most desperate enterprises of spoliation. If you win, you augment your possessions; if you fail, the worst that can happen to you is that you will have to draw a cheque upon your bankers. You can't go wrong. Rothschild or Baring, London or Amsterdam, will find you the money at five per cent." I confess it is to me simply *inconceivable* that any reflecting or respectable statesman or journalist should be found to endorse such an utterly untenable, shameless, and immoral plea.*

* The following quotation from the 'Pall Mall Gazette'

Another argument against the demand for a rectification of frontier has been much dwelt upon, of which I am quite unable to recognize the cogency. "An enforced cession of terri-

points out how the hardships of the condition might be softened to the immediate sufferers by the transfer:—

"'But,' we are reminded, 'the condition involves the inadmissible transfer to another Government of a quarter of a million of persons who wish to retain their former allegiance.' Granted; but, again, analyse this objectionable condition, and consider how easily its objectionable character might, if negotiators once began to treat in a reasonable temper, be reduced to a minimum. Conditions may easily be conceived, and could probably have been obtained, which would wonderfully soften and mitigate even the hardship to a German people of becoming German citizens once more; and at all events the negotiators could have secured to every resident and proprietor the right of disposing of his property and removing himself within the new frontier; of making his choice, in short, between a change of citizenship and a change of habitation. Now, what is this virtually but the option which every year is forced by circumstances upon a quarter of a million of British subjects, and a nearly equal number of Germans, who as emigrants have to seek their fortunes in America or Australia? What is it, in fact, but a similiar expropriation, on a larger scale, to those which we, every one of us, have to submit to when our house or our estate is wanted for a railway or an embankment, or any so-called municipal 'improvement;' and when in the name of the public good we are summoned to sever our old associations and our cherished memories and our local ties, to break up our homesteads and betake ourselves elsewhere?"

tory," it is urged, "will be a rankling sore—a proof of defeat ever before their eyes—a humiliation which they will be for ever burning to wipe out—a loss of *prestige* which a proud nation never can permanently submit to. To insist upon it is simply to ensure a perpetually recurring state of hostilities between the two nations." To my mind it seems as if the very terms in which this plea is urged furnished an indication of its invalidity. French "*prestige*" simply means French pretension to military supremacy in Europe, the claim of France to dictate or to dominate all Continental policy. It is precisely this which the interests of Europe require *should* be lost. In what way would the surrender of the Vosges Mountains be a greater "humiliation" than the capitulation of Sedan or Metz, or the compelled dismantling of the Eastern fortresses? Does any one believe that France, whenever she becomes powerful enough, will not be at least as eager to wipe out the latter as the former shame? Or that she would tamely acquiesce in what was indisputably a military disgrace and a stain upon her generalship and her arms, yet burn to avenge what was merely the natural condition of peace after a

disastrous war? Who in his heart supposes that a succession of crushing defeats, the surrender of the two largest armies that ever laid down their arms, the entire collapse of their military strength and the overrunning of their whole country after one month of fighting, will not be a far bitterer pill for the national pride than the mere loss of a strip of territory? Who believes that, if Germany were to retire now and make peace without one single condition, the memory of their disasters would not rankle in the hearts of Frenchmen till the day of vengeance and atonement dawned? It is humiliation, not spoliation, that is so hard to bear,

"But," excited remonstrants exclaim, "is it possible that you have no admiration for the 'heroic attitude' of Paris, or the 'sublime' determination of the country;—for the patriotism which spurns a peace purchased at the price of dismemberment;—for the resolution which would rather die than submit to humiliating terms;—for the indomitable courage which refuses to accept even the most terrible defeats as final and irreparable, and continues the conflict in every corner of the land, even when the prospect is absolutely hopeless? Have you no compassion

mingled with surprised respect for the noble spirit of self-sacrifice displayed by a luxurious and pleasure-loving capital prepared to endure the last miseries of famine and bombardment rather than treat while the enemy is at its gates?"—Yes: *infinite compassion*, but of respect or admiration not one faint pulsation. Let us, at least on this side of the Channel, call things by their right names, and decline to desecrate noble and spirit-stirring words by unfitting applications. We, here, have no excuse like our neighbours, either in temperament or in circumstances, for thus "filling our belly with the east wind"—to use a strong metaphor of the old Hebrew prophet. I can recognize nothing laudable or grand in what is inflated, unreal, and based upon falsehood and delusion. There is no courage, because there is no truth, in refusing to see and to accept indisputable facts because they are mortifying and distressing,—rather, feeble vanity and want of genuine fortitude and pluck. It is a spurious and limping patriotism that makes war to dismember other countries, yet protests against its own dismemberment as horrible sacrilege and crime. To play a desperate and sinful game and then refuse to pay the stakes when lost, appears

to me not noble but dishonest. I see nothing "sublime" in Frenchmen shutting their eyes to the reality of each discomfiture, attributing every surrender and defeat to treachery, and denouncing every unsuccessful general as a traitor or imbecile,—but rather something ineffably mean and unworthy. I can recognize nothing admirable in calling out countless multitudes to slaughter whom you can neither discipline nor arm, in ordering every village and open town to resist to the death at the cost of useless bloodshed and devastation, and in denouncing every sensible authority who abjures such culpable folly as a coward. To sacrifice a people to a phrase is not heroism, but shallow egotism, for which no condemnation can be too severe. To talk, as Jules Favre does, of the surrender of a slip of territory which would still have left France larger and more populous than she was ten years ago, as the "annihilation and ruin" of his country, is not rational eloquence nor truth, but mere windy and grandiloquent hysteria.*

* "One word more as to another unreality connected with this subject. M. Ernest Renan, and some writers almost as eminent, demand the interposition of Europe to save France, on the plea that the 'extinction' of the French element in European

To arouse an ignorant and easily deluded nation to obstinate and suicidal resistance by misrepresentations, inventions, suppressions, denials, deliberate and enormous lies almost without parallel, appears to dispassionate observers a governmental crime of the very deepest die. For a nation, *with its eyes unbandaged*, and with the means of making a genuine decision, to resolve upon continuing a desperate and hopeless

civilization would be a grievous loss to humanity at large. Unquestionably it would. But in what manner or in what sense would the collapse of the military supremacy or dictatorship of France extinguish or injuriously affect the French element of European civilization? It is the intellect, the taste, the ingenuity, the science, the precision of thought and of the expression of that thought in France that have been a gain and a blessing to the world; and how would any of these things be destroyed, or even impaired, because French arms and French ambition had received a salutary and conclusive check?

"The crime of prolonging this awfully murderous strife is second only to that of having commenced it. But the second crime, like the first, lies at the door of the French people and their rulers. The people will not submit to the terms demanded because they have been so deceived as to the extent and reality of their defeat, and so inflamed by long years of stimulating braggadocio as to their claims. The rulers dare not, because the people they have so long hoodwinked and are still deceiving cannot conceive the necessity of a surrender, and probably enough in righteous retribution would destroy those who saved them by capitulating."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

strife rather than submit to something that is indeed dishonour, would be sublime, and might possibly be even wise;—but what are we to say of rulers who systematically blind the nation in order that it may do with its eyes shut what they well know it would not do with its eyes open? There is no patriotism, there is no honour, there is nothing but parricidal selfishness and usurpation, in a handful of Republican chiefs preventing the election of a National Assembly which was nearly certain to repudiate their policy and pronounce their *déchéance*, and in the plenitude of their own brief authority rejecting negotiations for a peace which would have carried with it the termination of their political existence. To expose a million of women and children to the horrors of a bombardment, and the far worse and more certain horrors of starvation (which must fall first and hardest on the feeble and the poor), rather than surrender a city "on which the eyes of all Europe are fixed," is not to my mind an "heroic" attitude, so much as a cruelly self-conscious and histrionic one. I can admire nothing, not even self-sacrifice or personal bravery and daring (which no one ever contested to the French), that is hollow, bombastic, and thea-

trical, and ever glancing round to make sure that the eyes of Europe really are upon it. Last of all, in making war *à outrance*, in refusing to confess defeat, or to make terms of peace when vanquished, I can recognize no enduring fortitude, but simply a relapse towards barbarism—a pretension utterly inappropriate and inadmissible under the conditions of modern civilization. In ancient days,* when defeat meant captivity or extermination to the vanquished, there was some significance and sense in "nailing your colours to the mast," "fighting to the last man," "dying in the last ditch,"—and similar expressions. But in the nineteenth century, when nearly every country has been vanquished in turn, and none have been annihilated or very seriously weakened, when the beaten nation, like the knight worsted in the tournament, merely pays a ransom, gets his wounds healed, and mounts his horse again, lamed or possibly mutilated, and perhaps less aggressive in the future—war, *à outrance*, is either a mere phrase, or it means and invites savagery. Treaties of peace are our modern contrivances for avoiding desperation, "annihilation," and extremities of all sorts.

* See Appendix II.

All this may seem harsh to a nation half-maddened and utterly bewildered by the surprise and shock of an utter, and an utterly unexpected, discomfiture. But those are no true friends to France who would aid her in her self-delusions now. In this supreme crisis of her fate, her safety, her resurrection, her future reorganization and recovery, lie in her recognition of the naked and unwelcome truth—in seeing her position and its causes without exaggeration as without disguise. It is simply puerile now to talk nonsense or to talk metaphor. If she makes at once such a peace as it is probably, even at this eleventh hour, within her power to make, she will not be one whit ruined, or "annihilated," or extinguished, or "blotted out of the map of Europe,"—or any of the things with which she is inflaming her exasperated feelings and her sombre imagination. She will be considerably weakened for aggressive purposes, especially in one direction—that is all. She will no longer, single-handed, be able to give the law to Europe, as she has hitherto assumed to do, and has often succeeded in doing. She will no longer be in a condition to play the Hawk, the Peacock, and the Pouter-Pigeon of

the Continent, and to feed the vain-glory of her more foolish citizens by such phrases as "Quand la France est satisfaite l'Europe est tranquille." That, if she takes it aright, may be far more of a gain than of a loss. She will scarcely even be weakened, for more than a very brief space, *for any of the purposes which a wise nation*, cognizant of the essence and conditions of true grandeur, should desire to carry out. She will still have thirty-six or thirty-eight millions of the most condensed and homogeneous people in Europe, which she may soon make forty or forty-five millions if she please. She will still be enormously rich, with vast powers of production and a vast margin for economy, with thriving industries and an expansive commerce, whose increase only war can seriously check. She will still possess an army as large as she can legitimately need—larger perhaps than she may find it prudent to retain—an army which only requires purifying, moralizing, and redisciplining, to be as formidable as ever. In ten years, perhaps even in five, she may be wealthier, more populous, more tranquil at home, and certainly a greater favourite abroad, than she was five years ago—with her prosperity based on a far

sounder foundation, and her grandeur acquiring a far nobler stamp. She will have ceased to feel her present disaster as an evil or a drain. She may even be learning to recognize in it one of those blessings in disguise with which the just gods favour those whom they seek to chasten but not to crush, and who have proved incorrigible by any gentler lessons.

But that France may arise, purged and invigorated from her strange disaster, and prepare to pursue a nobler greatness by a cleaner road, it is essential that she should have fully understood and definitively learned the lesson that disaster was sent to teach. If the war ends without the truth having been thoroughly brought home to her, if peace leaves her with one shred of her old delusions still covering her nakedness and hiding her from herself, if facts are not so mirrored to her comprehension that, "beholding her natural face in a glass," she shall never again be able to mistake or to forget its real features, the healing influence, the bitter tonic of her misfortunes, will have been administered in vain. No true friend would wish her victory now, nor even such conditions of peace as the national habit of self-delusion and

self-worship could, in a few years, drape and paint and mystify into a victory. Her discomfiture, if it is to prove, as we hope, her salvation, must be as signal and as undisguisable as her crime. The medicine, to be curative or even salutary, must be bitter.—Now what, politically regarded, are the three great, dangerous, disqualifying faults of the French national character—habits of the French mind? Perhaps we should rather ask what are the three specially pernicious forms which the one prominent vice of Frenchmen—their intense egotism—is accustomed to assume? The right of France to dictate to the world; the right of Paris to dictate to all France; the right of every individual Frenchman to impose his particular will upon the nation;—in a word, an overweening sense in Frenchmen of their own claims, and a curious incapacity to recognize or measure the conflicting or concurrent claims of others. Frenchmen seem unable even in their intimate convictions to place themselves on the same level as other races or other States, or to measure others by their own standard. The incapacity seems intellectual quite as much as moral. The sentiment is not arrogance so much as an axiom of

the inner consciousness. France is a sort of diamond among stones. Frenchmen are "the precious porcelain of human clay"—Sèvres china, where other races are common pottery. They have a kind of original, natural, obvious claim to supremacy and leadership. They stand saliently in the van of civilization. Their superiority *saute aux yeux*. Their soldiers are inherently invincible. Any facts to the contrary are accidents and flukes. If they are ever defeated, it is because they were outnumbered, betrayed, or sold. It *cannot* be that in fair fight they could be worsted. The very moral rules that serve for ordinary humanity scarcely apply to them.* Frenchmen are exceptionally privileged, a favoured race; almost a sacred one. What France may do to other nations, it would be a monstrous pretension for other nations to do to

* The very laws of honour are suspended or reversed where the relations of Frenchmen with the Gentiles are concerned. General officers may break their parole when given to a Prussian captor: nay, it even appears that republican ministers *command* officers to do so. Is French egotism really beginning to be pushed so far that a promise given to a foe is regarded as no more binding than formerly among good Catholics an engagement taken with a pagan or a heretic? Surely this will be only a passing aberration—patriotism run mad.

France. France may invade other lands, take other cities, enter or besiege other capitals; but for other States, the mere mass of mankind, the οἱ πολλοι, the *canaille*, to retaliate, shocks them like sacrilege or parricide. France marches into Berlin, Vienna, Moscow,—nothing more proper, natural, or normal. But for Prussia, Austria, or Russia to invest Paris or bombard her,—that is horrible, audacious, inconceivable; a crime which the congregated world should rush together to prevent or to avenge. The devastation of the Palatinate or Bavaria is one of the usual occurrences of war; the devastation of Picardy or Champagne is mere barbarity and vandalism. France is entitled to tear away and annex Savoy, Nice, Baden, Trèves, even Belgium if she can; but for Germany to reclaim Alsace is laying a sacrilegious hand upon the ark of the Lord. In a word, the manner in which Frenchmen regard other nations in their heart, and too often treat them in manner and in act, has its only counterpart in the style in which, in the times of Louis XIV., a French *gentilhomme* or noble regarded a *roturier*, a *bourgeois*, or a valet.*

* "Now it is precisely all these pernicious delusions and decep-

With something of the same lofty scorn Paris looks upon the provinces. She decides for the provinces, issues her decrees, overthrows a government they elected, and expects them to obey a government which a Parisian mob instals. She denies them a voice in their own affairs, resolves without consultation on the continuance of a war which devastates their fields, and the rejection

tions which the expression of English sympathy is fostering. It is backing up the men who keep France in ignorance of her true position, who first cheat her shamelessly and then speak and act for her audaciously, who make her count on neutral intervention, who tell her that it is Germany and not France that ought to make concessions, who persuade her that it is Prussia which is about to bombard Paris, not Paris and the Government which insist on being bombarded. Let us tell her the plain truth at once, viz. that the terms demanded, however impolitic, are by no means excessive or unreasonable; that she has no choice but to submit; and that, if she is still incurable, it would be far wiser for her to renew the contest when she has recovered than to prolong it now that she is prostrate. In my opinion England (or, at least, England's Government) was guilty of a grievous fault in not expressing at the outset the most decided condemnation of the aggression as an unwarrantable crime. Let her not now commit a corresponding error, nor shrink from telling France that she has richly deserved her punishment, and has no choice but to submit to it. We had not the manliness to tell her, powerful and aggressive, that she was in the wrong; let us have the friendliness at least to tell her, bleeding and helpless, that she is in the wrong still."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

of an armistice which they were supposed eagerly to sigh for.* She forbids the election of a national assembly, in which the provinces might express their wishes, but expects them to rush to her rescue. She orders a *levée en masse* throughout France, and is amazed that Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, and Rouen need the local soldiery for their own defence. Nay, if the accounts we read of the conduct of the Paris *bourgeoisie* and National Guard are true, the pampered classes of the capital shirk their portion of the task in hand, and expect the Garde Mobile of Brittany to fight for them, while they loungingly look on.

Even this, however, is a less marked feature

* The 'Daily News' ten days ago writes thus:—"M. Louis Blanc takes a widely different view of affairs. He would summon the King of Prussia to submit the dispute to the arbitrament of two republics and two monarchies—and meanwhile he would prosecute the struggle though Paris must fight single-handed and alone. To him Paris is the head and heart of France, and had better perish than lose its dignity. He would have no Constituent Assembly called, lest the provinces should sacrifice the capital. Paris is fighting as much for its position in France as for the position of France in Europe, and Paris can conquer without provincial help, if she will but continue true to the Republic and faithful to herself."

than the pretension of every man to make his own will prevail, and to erect his doctrines and judgment into an absolute standard of the right and wise. Perhaps most individuals in most countries are more or less amenable to this charge; but nowhere does the peculiarity stand out so strongly as in France, and nowhere does it seem so strangely inappropriate as in the land of equality and under a political system whose foundation is universal suffrage. There is no "give and take" among parties in France. They have no notion of compromise or of participation. Each one in turn, if predominant, insists upon being absolute. Each, if out-voted, refuses to accept the verdict of the majority, and is ready "to descend into the streets," as the phrase is. They proclaim universal suffrage, deify it, establish it, and then deny any obligation to submit to its decrees. Republicans know they are a small minority of the nation; but convinced that they ought to be supreme, they would thwart and gag the voice of the majority lest it should pronounce against them. It was so in 1848. It is so in 1870. On the former occasion the Republican National Guards in Paris

made their officers engage to march against the Assembly—elected by the suffrages of all France—in case it should, as there was some reason to expect, pronounce against a Republican form of government. At present, the same party, again uppermost, object to calling a National Convention lest it should declare in favour of a peace which *they* think undesirable. In precisely the same spirit, the Reds of one faubourg of the metropolis—not one-tenth of the population—fancying the actual occupants of the Hôtel de Ville not warlike or resolute enough, surround them by a *coup de main*, and attempt to wrest the reins of government out of their hands.

These are among the most salient characteristics which have so long rendered the French people at once the chronic disturbers of the peace of Europe, and unable to frame any durable, commanding, generally-accepted system of rule among themselves. Any war, however disastrous—any peace, however humiliating—which should eradicate or fatally undermine these faults, would probably in the end prove the greatest boon Providence ever conferred upon a nation, the commencement of a new era,

the inauguration of a career far nobler and grander than any her past history can point to. But for it to prove this harbinger and fountain of good, two moral reforms yet deeper and more intimate must be wrought in the substance of the people's life. They must learn to face the truth—to bear to look at and to listen to unwelcome and mortifying facts, severe rebukes, searching probes, excruciating cautery. And they must set bounds to, if they may not eradicate, that passion for luxury and material enjoyment which has eaten so deeply into the nation's heart. They must curb "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," and teach their youth to "endure hardness." It is not that the faults in question are peculiar to the French people;—God knows, we all share them!—but that they are rife and rampant there more than elsewhere, have grown to vaster dimensions, and have increased and spread with alarming rapidity among their upper and idler classes, and among their army more especially, during the last quarter of a century. It would seem as if the very basis of a high or healthy morality had been sapped or fallen to decay. The power of belief, the faculty of reverence, appear to have died out. The only

thing resembling faith, enthusiasm, earnest purpose, that lingers seems to be confined to the ranks of the Republicans and Socialists, and to be strongest among the reddest and most dangerous. But this motive power is essentially a destructive, not a creative one—at least it seeks the construction of what it deems ought to be, through the preliminary overthrow of what is. But disaster, if terrible enough, is sometimes the regeneration of corrupt nations; and under the teaching of calamity France may yet be given the strength to descend as with a penetrating lamp into the depths of her own nature, to trace her military and political catastrophes to their moral roots, to abjure her wretched vanities, her blinding egotisms, her false gods, and her ignoble creeds, to worship a truer grandeur, and to kneel before a purer shrine.

But the task before her is a very hard one; the way is dark and up-hill, the leaders and the finger-posts are few. I wrote twenty years ago, what might be written just as appropriately now.

"A revolution such as that of February, 1848—being as it were an aggressive negation, not a positive effort, having no clear idea at its root, but being simply the product of discontent

and disgust—furnishes no foundation for a Government. Loyalty to a legitimate monarch, deference to an ancient aristocracy, faith in a loved and venerated creed, devotion to a military leader, sober schemes for well-understood material prosperity—all these may form, and have formed, the foundation of stable and permanent governments; mere reaction, mere denial, mere dissatisfaction, mere vague desires, mere aggression on existing things—never!

"To construct a firm and abiding commonwealth out of such materials, and in the face of such obstacles, is the problem the French people are called upon to conduct to a successful issue. Without a positive and earnest creed, without a social hierarchy, without free municipal institutions and the political education they bestow, without a spirit of reverence for rights, and of obedience to authority penetrating all ranks—we greatly doubt whether the very instruments for the creation of a republic are not wanting. A republic does not create these—it needs and postulates their existence."

The immediate prospects of France are gloomy and undecipherable in the extreme. No chief has yet appeared; no goal is yet in view. There is no pilot at the helm, and no haven to steer for. If, indeed, it were possible that, almost by a miracle, the popular armies now organizing in all directions should succeed in driving back or cutting off the invaders, the astonishing rescue would establish the Republic which had effected it, for a time at least, without a rival in the enthusiastic affections of the nation. But even

then, in order to secure to it either a permanent life or a beneficent career, a wisdom and a virtue would be needed of which the Republican leaders have as yet given no proof or sign; even then they would have a hard contest to maintain against their own hollow theories and the wild passions and designs of their hungriest and extremest, but at the same time most devoted, supporters. Republicanism, if not repudiated by the proprietary fears of the peasantry and the *bourgeoisie*, would almost inevitably fall under the insane demands and the attacks in rear of the Socialistic artisans whose views it half shares, and the plundering propensities of the criminals and roughs whose material assistance it dare scarcely alienate by a determined declaration of war. Among the lower classes in France the dreams of the honest are too wild, and the aims of the base are too wicked, not to be almost insuperable dangers to any government but the most resolute and powerful. But if, as seems probable, this disastrous war must end in an unqualified surrender and a mortifying peace, it is difficult even to conjecture by what process society and government can be reconstituted; whence the initiative is to be given—where the

materials are to be found. The existing ministers will be too discredited by their defeat to retain a vestige of power, and no rival is at hand to snatch the reins. A fairly elected National Assembly—especially if it could meet in some spot protected from the mob of Paris—might stumble upon some solution of the problem, if it saw as clearly as we seem to see the real need of France—the establishment, namely, of a government powerful in the adhesion of all the influential classes, as well as of the numerical majority; strong enough, therefore, to curb with an unfearing grasp all the turbulent and vicious elements of the population, and with its strength unimpaired by the incurable paralysis ever clinging to an authority which dates from a violent and guilty origin, and must, therefore, lean on violent and guilty instruments for its maintenance. Even then, however, a rule inaugurated by the soundest and healthiest portion of the nation, and bent upon pursuing wise and honest aims, would find at the very outset a terrible obstacle to deal with, in the return home of an unbroken standing army, 350,000 strong, untaught by captivity or defeat, full of the old bad Imperial traditions and the old bad Algerian

habits—the men insubordinate, the officers luxurious and ignorant, hating Republicans, despising civilians—altogether an evil, noxious, corrupting, unmanageable thing.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX I.

SIGNS OF MISDIRECTED SENTIMENT.

To the Editor of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—Some ominous symptoms are beginning to appear in various directions that the healthy tone of feeling and opinion which has hitherto prevailed in reference to the terrible conflict going on across the Channel is in danger of perversion. Whether it be inconstancy natural to most public emotions, the fatigue of uniformity, simple pity at the prolonged and augmenting distress among a population which surely, it is thought, whatever their faults or the faults of their rulers, have now suffered enough—or whether it be jealousy or fear of the unceasing and sweeping successes of the German hosts, and some reviving anxiety about the balance of power—or whether the note of Gortschakoff and the indication of certain extensive and menacing complications in the distance—it is difficult to say. But there can be no doubt that

within the last few days some leading organs of opinion have been exerting themselves to direct public sentiment against Germany, and totally to misrepresent patent facts and just principles in doing so. The 'Times' not long since drew a vivid picture of the devastation and misery of many French provinces, of the dogged and ferocious spirit which this state of things is said to be rousing among the populations of the invaded countries, and of the probability that a store of deadly hatred will thus be laid up for coming years and for the rising generation.

"We may believe with some confidence that the Empire will be condemned for the crime of bringing these miseries upon France; but even then the spirit of hatred of the actual perpetrators will not be appeased. The next generation may acknowledge that the Emperor was the aggressor, but they will add that their fathers offered, and offered in vain, the fullest reparation for the offence of their ruler. They were ready to submit to every penalty, and to grant every security for the future, that neutral judges pronounced adequate, and the conquerors hardened their hearts against them. It is in vain to expect that the relentless determination of the German leaders will be forgiven. The names of those who would not hold their hands until they had exacted their uttermost demands, until they had made subject to themselves unwilling citizens of France, will be names named only to be cursed."

Now, Sir, I submit that a more unfair representation, a more utterly unfaithful statement of the true facts of the case, has not often appeared in a public journal. Is it quite impossible to sympathize with

suffering without being unjust to strength? Cannot we yield to our compassionate feelings without sacrificing our moral rectitude? Cannot we plead for the vanquished without denouncing the conqueror? Wrong does not turn to right because the wrongdoer has brought upon himself fearful woes, and writhes and groans under the infliction. A bad cause does not become a good one because it is worsted. Now, is it true that the French "have offered and offered in vain, the fullest reparation for the offence of their ruler"? Is it not notoriously the very reverse of true? Have they not arrogantly refused every reparation beyond a pecuniary fine? Have they not insisted on atoning for a heinous crime by a mere sum of money? Again:—What "penalty have they been ready to submit to"? What "security for the future" have they expressed their willingness to grant? And, moreover, what specific atonement and guarantee have "neutral judges pronounced adequate" that the French have agreed to and the Germans have refused? I know of none. The neutral Powers, it was understood, had expressly abstained from urging any particular terms of peace upon either belligerent. And assuredly no competent judges have pronounced a pecuniary indemnity to be an adequate security or penalty. If they had done so, they could scarcely have been considered neutral.

The whole purport of the representation I am controverting is to make it appear that the French have

sued for peace at the hands of the conquerors, and that the Germans have refused it unless on terms utterly cruel and inadmissible. Now, what are the facts of the case—all the facts so far as they have come before the public in any trustworthy or authentic form? The French have never sued for peace. When the Empire was overthrown, the new Foreign Minister —at the suggestion, it is understood, of the English representative, who smoothed the way for the interview—visited Count Bismarck, and represented to him that, as the Imperial Government, which alone was warlike and aggressive, had been replaced by Republicans, who were always pacific, friendly, and innocuous —mild, suffering angels, in short—the war was *ipso facto* over, and that he ought to withdraw his forces at once. Count Bismarck naturally opened his eyes in some surprise, did not exactly recognize the axiomatic character of the premisses, and declined to draw the suggested conclusion—adding, probably, that the Republican Government, however bland its nature and intentions, might not be as permanent as was presumed. M. Jules Favre then offered to pay the expenses of the war, but volunteered the assertion that he would concede nothing more—"not an inch of territory, nor a stone of any fortress." In short, he took the tone, not of a man suing for peace, but of one dictating its terms. This tone seemed so inappropriate to Count Bismarck, and so unpromising of any common ground for negotiation, that the conference was broken

off; M. Favre declaring that Bismarck was bent upon "annihilating France," "reducing her to the rank of a second-rate Power," and the like windy phrases—Count Bismarck "regretting that he had been unable to convince M. Favre that the honour of France was not, in its essence, different from the hononr of any other country;" and that what all other defeated belligerents had to submit to could be no special humiliation to her.

The war went on. Fortress after fortress fell before the invader, victory after victory was gained, the German hosts swept onward, and the capital was beleaguered and invested. The next step was the proposal of an armistice—not asked for, be it observed, by the defeated belligerent, whose case seemed by this time hopeless, but offered by the conqueror, again at the suggestion of the British Government, in order that France might herself have an opportunity of saying whether she wished for peace or not—a mere handful of men in Paris having hitherto taken upon themselves to decide and speak in her behalf. Did the French Government grasp eagerly at the proposal, or show any gratitude to those who gave them this fresh opportunity for negotiation? Far from it. After having a few weeks before negatived or brought to nothing a similar attempt on the part of an American peacemaker, General Burnside, they coldly accepted the new overture, but demanded conditions which would have been exclusively favourable to themselves, inas-

much as they would have thereby gained what they most wanted—namely, time to train their forces and import and fabricate munitions of war; while exposure and disease would have made havoc in the ranks of the besiegers. They insisted on terms which it was simply impossible the Germans, in justice to their own troops, could grant; and, when these were refused, they broke off the negotiations. Count Bismarck then —anxious that France should at least be allowed to express her own views; anxious too, no doubt, to find or create some legitimately constituted authority with which he could treat; anxious also, I believe, to rescue the doomed city and the desolated land from the last misfortunes which the benighted and fanatical leaders at the head of affairs seemed bent on bringing on—proposed that the elections should be held without an armistice, engaging to give every facility and every assistance towards freedom of election. And this would, I fully believe, have been no mockery; since none who know France will maintain that even Prussian occupation in the few departments which they held would exercise a more undue influence on the electors than is habitually exercised by prefects or by clubs and mobs. But this proposal also was summarily rejected—a rejection which assuredly warrants the surmise, if it does not compel the conviction, that the Republican chiefs of Paris, so obstinately bent on carrying on the conflict to the bitter end, are too well aware that France, as a people, is not Republican, and

would not endorse their policy of desperate and hopeless resistance. Such, at least, is the conclusion I draw from the best information I can gather. I believe a fairly elected National Assembly, made acquainted with the truth, would show a vast majority for peace.

The simple, indisputable facts of the case are these: —the French Government have never sued for peace, have never offered reasonable terms of peace, have done what they could to make negotiations for peace impossible. France might have peace to-morrow if the Parisian Government would let her—and peace, I believe, on conditions not only fair and moderate, but generous under the circumstances even yet—though no doubt every day of prolonged resistance will exasperate German feelings and may raise German demands. If Paris is starved or bombarded, if the country round is devastated, if peasants are driven from their homes, if town after town is crushed by requisitions, let it be clearly understood that it is the French and not the German Government that insists on all these miseries. France, though utterly defeated, has never yet asked for peace. Germany, though signally triumphant, has offered peace twice—and once at least (after Sedan) on terms singularly moderate. And, as far as appearances and probabilities may be our guide, there is every reason to conclude that at this moment Bismarck is more sincerely desirous of peace than either Favre or Gambetta. W. R. G.

P.S.—It should be recognized that in these days a

nation when thoroughly beaten has scarcely a right to refuse terms of peace. To oppose a sullen *non possumus* to the conqueror, and insist on resistance *à outrance*, is simply to make modern wars like ancient ones—wars of desolation and extermination and indefinite duration; and the guilt lies with the sufferer. Of course, if the defeated nation rationally believes it can redeem its fortunes, or if the only terms of peace attainable are so crushing and cruel that extinction would be preferable, the case is different. But who will say that either of these exceptional pleas can be advanced here?

It is beginning now to be apparent that the Liberal Opposition made a sad blunder in September last in declaring the *déchéance* of the Empire on hearing of the capitulation of Sedan. Had it not been for that impetuous and ill-considered step, peace would probably have been immediately concluded by the Empress Regent on the terms then offered by the Prussian Government; and the whole odium both of the disastrous war and the humiliating peace would have fallen on the Imperial dynasty—odium which assuredly it could not long have survived. Metz and Paris would both have been saved, and the new Government and Constitution of France might have been created with some degree of deliberation, and under far fairer auspices.

APPENDIX II.

WAR *A OUTRANCE*—WHAT IT MEANS.

To the Editor of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—I have read with some care, but also with no slight bewilderment, the four screams which Mr. Frederic Harrison has uttered through your columns, as well as the far more powerful, because more sober and argumentative, appeal which he has published in the 'Fortnightly Review.' I am at a loss to comprehend the mental attitude of men with reasoning powers as practised and as vigorous as Mr. Harrison's, whose sympathies were all German at the outset and have become all French now; who denounced the assailants as utterly criminal and wrong, but condoned the iniquity the instant it was baffled; who held the German cause to be irrefragably righteous till its success rolled back the tide of war on the aggressor; yet maintain

that, to date from that critical moment, the assailer's position became sacred, and all the proceedings of the assailed became unholy. Does Mr. Harrison mean (what he certainly implies) that you are entitled to ward off a blow, but never to return it; that you may strike down an adversary, but must never punish or disarm him; that you may prevent the invader from entering your territory, or drive him out if he has entered, but that you can on no plea be permitted to pursue him one mile beyond the frontier, or, even for distinct purposes of security or indemnification, become the invader in your turn? Will he maintain that you may wage a just and unavoidable war in your own country, but never in that of your assailant; or that a war, admitted to be beyond a question a defensive one, loses that character, and changes to its opposite, according to the locality of each successive battle? Or is this plea merely a mask to hide the real sentiment—that fighting against an Emperor is good, but that fighting against a Republic is laying sacrilegious hands upon the Lord's anointed?

Nor can I recognize any clearness of intellectual perception or sense of moral equity in Mr. Harrison's other award. He regards the obstinate and desperate resistance of the French people as legitimate, admirable, and heroic, yet denounces the dogged and resolute persistence of the German conquerors as cruel, barbarous, immoral, and every way condemnable. The laws of war, he admits, may nominally warrant German

reprisals against peasant sharpshooters, and German requisitions upon towns and villages; but law or no law, he declares them to be brutal outrages and crimes. That is to say, persistence "to the bitter end" in an iniquitous war begun by the French is a virtue on the side of the aggressor and a sin on the side of the aggrieved. The French peasant in his blouse may shoot German sentries or scouts from behind a wall or a hedge, but the Germans must not destroy his cottage or his farmstead, nor burn the village that harbours him. The one party may resist to the death, and by every means in their power; but the other party is held up to immortal reprobation if it does not hold its hand as soon as Mr. Harrison thinks the enemy have had enough. To ordinary intellects there would appear to be scant fairness in this strange award. Ordinary intellects would pronounce that the party originally in the wrong must be the party to cease the conflict, to ask for peace, to confess fault as well as failure, and to offer terms; that, of two combatants equally pertinacious and resolved, the responsibility for all the horrors and miseries which war *à outrance* must entail lies at the door of that one who began the unjust war for purposes of dictation and aggrandizement; and that by no plea of equity can the conqueror be asked to retire and to forego the fruits of victory till the conquered confesses himself vanquished. Mr. Harrison says the Frenchman is defending his own homestead and his native country, and is warranted, therefore, in

slaying every Prussian who comes within his reach. By parity of reasoning, and I believe with equal truth, I may reply that the Prussian (although by the fortune of war on French territory) is equally defending his country, and is warranted in defending it by every severity sanctioned by the laws of war. It is generally held that it is for the vanquished and not the victor to lay down the sword. France may have peace to-morrow if she asks it; on France, therefore, lies the responsibility of continuing the war. It is France which insists upon war *à outrance*. The Germans much prefer, and I believe have almost, if not quite, exclusively confined themselves to regular warfare: France, therefore, must bear the blame of all the atrocities and severities which war *à outrance* inevitably entails. It is France which has organized the francs-tireurs, and sanctioned and proclaimed a guerilla resistance. At the door of France, therefore, must lie the guilt of all that this system of warfare compels the conquerors to inflict. If, indeed, Germany had invaded France without provocation, or in an unjust cause, then every life she had taken, every farm she had burned, every village she had plundered, since the sword was first drawn, would have been a crime. But tne fact is notoriously the reverse.

Mind, I am not saying—it is not needful for my purpose to say—that the French are wrong in resisting to the death and obstinately refusing to sue for peace. If they believe, or have any rational hopes, that they

can yet baffle the invader and drive him by any means from their soil, they have a fair right to try. Under similar circumstances we ourselves, however wrong to begin with, should probably do the same. Only then do not let us be so curiously unjust as to condemn the Germans for endeavouring by all means to baffle that resistance, and remain in possession of the advantages they have gained. War *à outrance* makes the conflict one of desperation, and virtually of life and death to both combatants; it abjures and foregoes all those privileges and amenities by which civilization has sought to mitigate the horrors of warfare; practically, it converts a combat of armies into a hand-to-hand fight of individuals and peoples; virtually, it transforms something like a tournament in the lists into something like a struggle in the dark between two barbarous and infuriated savages; finally, it brutalizes and maddens all engaged. It may be the least of two evils, it may be the natural and indefeasible right of the worsted nation. But do not let the combatant who chooses it, and who was originally guilty of bringing on the strife, seek either to evade the sole responsibility, or to claim the exclusive advantages, or to cry shame on the inevitable retaliatory consequences and horrors, of the decision.

There is another point, and a somewhat peculiar one, which has scarcely yet received the attention it deserves. War *à outrance*, under the conditions and modifications which civilization has introduced into

modern hostilities, may become very unfair to the conquerors, and promises to be so in the present instance. If the vanquished nation simply and pertinaciously refuses to make peace, and either lies passive in sullen inaction or adopts a system of harassing and desultory warfare, this attitude alone may go far to baffle the victors and deprive them of the legitimate fruits of victory. In ancient times a people who acted thus under complete defeat would have been exterminated or led into slavery, their country devastated, their cities pillaged and destroyed. In our days common humanity, the laws of nations, the public opinion of Europe, and the vast scale on which modern hostilities are carried on, forbid any such procedure; and in consequence give to the defeated combatant, if wrong at the outset and desperately obstinate to the last, an altogether illegitimate advantage.

Thus in the actual war we are considering. Scarcely ever in recent times has there been a war more utterly guilty and indefensible in its object and inception. Scarcely ever has the offending nation met with so complete an overthrow. All its armies have been beaten, its fortresses taken, and nearly the whole of its regular troops have been made prisoners. Its capital is beleaguered, and will probably in a few weeks have to surrender to the horrible necessities of famine. But still the nation (or the Government) refuses to sue for peace, to offer or accept any reasonable terms. The Germans, whose cause was undeniably

just, whose victory has been extraordinarily complete, whose desire for an end to the strife, in order to return to their homes, is most earnest, have certainly on every principle an irrefragable right to demand and to insist upon two conditions from the vanquished assailants—a sum of money which shall pay the expenses of the war, and the concession of such a fortified and defensible frontier as shall secure them against a renewal of the attack. It is upon the cards that French pertinacity may deprive them of both these hard-won and richly-deserved prizes.

Suppose the armies of the Loire and of the North dispersed or driven back into the distance. Suppose Paris taken or surrendered and triumphantly entered by the conquerors. The very completeness of the victory will constitute the impossibility of the situation. How can the Germans administer a city of two millions of inhabitants, a city of enemies, a city not accustomed to manage or govern or provide for itself, but trained into helplessness by perhaps the most thoroughly organized municipal administration in the world? The mayors and the municipal councils cannot be expected to act under their foreign masters or to do their work for them. The French authorities would probably resign in a body, and I do not see how Prussian administrators could adequately replace them. Then, if the victorious army are to be billeted about the town, how can murders innumerable be prevented among an exasperated population, or the inevitable retaliation for

these murders? Moreover, how are the 350,000 soldiers who will become prisoners of war to be dealt with? How can they be guarded and rendered innocuous in the very heart of their own country? How can they be even fed? or how can they be sent into Germany under escort without perilously weakening the army of occupation? Three-quarters of a million of captive troops on the other side of the Rhine becomes a serious feature in the position. In old times the difficulty would have been solved by shooting them all. That cannot be done now.

With Paris taken and all French armies captured or dispersed, the work of the Germans would be over, and they would have nothing to do but to march home again. They do not wish to occupy France permanently; on the contrary, their great anxiety is to get back to their families, their country, and their civil occupations. But neither do they wish to go home *re infectâ*. They want their war indemnity, and they want their rectified frontier. They have a clear right to both. How are they to obtain either? The latter, indeed, they may take and keep by simple armed occupation. But this involves an indefinite prolongation of the war—a chronic state of hostility, in fact—and they are pining for a speedy, settled, and enduring peace. And what about the war indemnity of a hundred millions? A treaty will give it them; pillage will not. A nation's money now is not much of it in portable form—in gold or silver or precious stones. Flocks

and herds and manufactures cannot be carried off; works of art would not defray a Prussian budget; and, moreover, public opinion denounces this sort of spoliation. Probably all the bullion in store in Paris, aided by all the cash requisitions that could be levied upon all the towns occupied by the Prussians, whether in jewels or in coin, would not reach fifty millions. The Germans cannot pay themselves, and the French refuse to pay them. Is it not plain, then, that war *à outrance* in such a case as this, where the vanquished are by universal admission clearly in the wrong, is neither in accordance with the principles of justice, nor conducive to humane and considerate warlike proceedings? A beaten people, beaten in a bad cause, who obstinately refuse to make atonement—vanquished offenders who nevertheless virtually contrive to cheat their conquerors out of the fruits of victory—present a spectacle which shocks every sentiment of equity. They have suffered no doubt (though scarcely more than their antagonists), but they have neither submitted nor offered restitution.

W. R. G.

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